

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



NEWS RELEASE

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Davis Praises House Passage of REAL ID Provisions

Common-Sense Driver's License Reforms,
Authored by Davis, Included in Supplemental Appropriations Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Government Reform Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA) issued the following statement in support of H.R. 1268, which passed the House this afternoon.

In addition to providing for emergency relief for U.S. Armed Forces fighting the War on Terror, tsunami disaster aid, and border security, the legislation makes important changes relating to state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards. It establishes minimum document and issuance standards for these cards, and gives states three years to come into compliance in order for the federal government to recognize their documents as proof of an individual's identity.

These provisions, which originated in the Government Reform Committee and passed the House last year as part of H.R. 10, were unfortunately removed from the final version of the 9-11 Commission Recommendations Act.

Chairman Davis's statement follows:

"Today, we addressed the most important provisions not included in the 9-11 Commission Recommendations Act.

"These reforms, consistent with the actions already taken by many states, mean that the federal government is no longer allowing our national security responsibilities to be compromised by dangerous gaps in how, and to who, driver's licenses are issued by individual states.

"Our approach is very straightforward. Building upon guidelines and best practices established and accepted by state Motor Vehicle Administrators, the federal

government's long-standing work on identity security, and actions taken by individual states to shore up their licensing process following the terrorist attacks; our legislation sets forth minimum document and issuance standards for federal acceptance of driver's licenses and state-issued personal identification cards. The legislation provides three years for states to come into compliance with these standards in order for the federal government to recognize their documents as proof of an individual's identity.

"Let me make one thing perfectly clear. States that want their driver's licenses to be used for federal identification purposes will be required to meet these standards. All of them. If they do not, the citizens of that state will not be able to use their driver's license to identify themselves for many purposes that they use them for today, such as boarding an airplane.

"States will also be required to confirm the applicant's proof of legal presence in the United States. Currently, only 11 states lack such a requirement, meaning a majority of states have already recognized the need for tighter standards, but unnecessary and dangerous gaps in the system still exist. Importantly, states are still permitted to issue driver's licenses to individuals who are not lawfully present in the United States or who cannot provide satisfactory proof of identity. The bill further provides that these licenses or identification cards must be clearly visually differentiated from other licenses and contain specific language regarding their validity for federal identification and other official purposes.

"In addition, the legislation will require identity documents to expire at the same time as the expiration of lawful entry status – this will prevent individuals who have illegally entered or are unlawfully present in the United States from having valid identification documents. This loophole was highlighted on September 11th, as Nawaf al Hazmi and Hani Hanjour, the pilots of Flight 77, both obtained licenses and identification cards after the expiration of their visa authorization. We must correct this dangerous problem before we again give individuals who have overstayed their visas the tools they need to integrate into society and carry out criminal and terrorist acts.

"It is important to note that these actions are consistent with those taken by individual states to date. For example, Nevada and New Mexico do not accept, as proof of identity, a state-issued driver's license or identification card from states that do not meet their own standards. The federal government has been delinquent in dealing with this issue, but we are correcting that problem today.

"Fraud in identity documents is no longer just a problem of theft. As we continue to strengthen our intelligence function to better identify and track terrorists, those individuals will be forced to find ways to conceal their identity in order to avoid detection. We must be able to establish, as close to certainty as we can, that people are who they say they are, and in order to do so the federal government must have documents that it can trust. In fact, we would not be fulfilling our security role for the American people if we did not."

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